

Believing For Greater Things: 4

Humility: The Prerequisite Of Greater Things

Matthew 20.20-28

- James and John desired greatness, and a position of authority.
- They came to Him, with their mother, requesting to sit at Jesus right and left hand.
- Jesus told them that greatness came at a cost – humility. If you want to be great learn to be a servant.

Like James & John many people desire greatness, great ministries, positions of authority and status – they need to learn the secret of humility....

John 3.30

“He must become greater, and I must become less important” (NCV)

John the Baptist :

- a forerunner of Christ (Malachi 3.1)
- God's anointed prophet to prepare the way for Jesus (Isaiah 40.3; Matthew 3.3)
- filled with the Holy Spirit from within the womb (Luke 1.15)
- a Nazarite – separated, consecrated to God from birth (Luke 1.15; Numbers 6.1-12)
- a preacher of repentance (Matthew 3.1-2)
- baptised people in water upon confession of their sins, after repentance (Matthew 3.6,8)
- arrayed in a prophet's garments (Matthew 3.4; 2 Kings 1.8; Zechariah 13.4)
- had a relatively short ministry (most scholars agree about 6-12 months length) after which he was imprisoned by Herod (Luke 3.19-20)
- executed by Herod (Matthew 14.3-11)
- declared by the archangel Gabriel to be 'great in the sight of the Lord' (Luke 1.15)
- declared by Jesus to be the greatest of all the prophets. (Luke 7.28; Matthew 11.11 omits 'prophet')

John discovered a secret – He must increase, I must decrease

The least in the kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist (Luke 7.28, Matthew 11.11)

What Does It Mean To Be Humble?

Let's look at the Scripture to see what led John to make this statement about Jesus.

Matthew 3.13-17

(1) Jesus did not need to be baptised by John as John's baptism was a baptism of repentance.

(2) John tries to prevent Jesus from being baptised.

He “protested strenuously” (Amp)

– other translations say:

- “He objected” (CEV);
- “He forbade Him” (AV);
- “He tried to make Him change His mind” (TEV)

We can gather from John's statement: “*I need to be baptised by You, and are You coming to me*” that his reasoning is - “I'm not worthy to do this”.

This thought is an overflow of what is in his heart – he testified himself that “I am not worthy to even carry His shoes” (see verse 11).

(3) “Permit it to be so now” - Take a step down, humble yourself and submit to this request without any objections.

“for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” - it is the right and proper way to fulfill righteousness.

Take a close look at this verse and two words in particular - “for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” - IT & US

Us – Jesus & John

“..for this is the fitting way for [both of] us to fulfill all righteousness [that is, to perform completely whatever is right]...” (Amp)

Jesus was saying to John that this was necessary for them both to fulfil righteousness, their duty to God.

- “this is how we should fulfil all our duty to God” (Moffatt)
- “for this is the fitting way for both of us to do our full duty to God” (Williams)
- “for it is right for us to do everything that God requires” (Goodspeed)

It – what is that duty? What is it that we must do to fulfil our duty to God?

- “we do well to conform in this way with all that God requires” (NEB)
- “It is right for us to meet meet all the Law's demands” - (JB Philips)

I suggest that Jesus is talking about submitting to God (rather than baptism) so that we fulfil righteousness.

Jesus had to submit to God and be baptised, even though He did not need baptism of repentance.

John had to submit to Jesus and baptise Him, when it really should have been the other way round.

Romans 12.1

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”

Our reasonable service (duty) is to present ourselves as a living sacrifice – a life surrendered and submitted to God.

(4) John humbled himself and submitted to Jesus and baptised Him

As Jesus came up out of the water, John saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove and coming upon Him and heard the voice of the Father speaking.

Greater things were taking place - he had seen with his eyes what God had revealed to him some time earlier.

John 1. 29-37

In this passage John testifies (v33) that God had shown Him that the One on whom he saw the Holy Spirit descending was the One.

God elevated him and his ministry. From then on he began to point men and women to Jesus. "He must increase, I must decrease" (John 3.30). John had learnt the lesson to be submitted to God

Whoever or whatever we submit to becomes greater in our lives. We give pre-eminence to what we submit to.

Humility (or to be humble) is to submit yourself to someone higher or greater, submission, make low.

James 4.6-7

"God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble"

- To be humble is also not making ourselves to feel so unworthy, or so poor, so debased – this is not humility, this is a type of pride, an inverted-pride and God resists that.
- To be humble is to submit yourself to God and what He says about you.

Philippians 2.8-9

Jesus humbled Himself. He submitted to His Father

- He only did and said what He heard from His Father – that's humility
- He was obedient to His Father's will – even in the garden of Gethsemane as He was facing the cross, He prayed and surrendered to His Father's will.
- Because he humbled Himself, God has highly exalted Him

1 Peter 5.6

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time"

James 4.10

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up"

Those who humble themselves are exalted – they are elevated to greater things